

Election Commission

Meeting Minutes

September 23, 2013

Present: Marjorie Butler, Nancy Levine, John McDermott

Also Present: City Clerk David Olson

On Friday, September 20, 2013, Kenneth Hartford, Chair of the Election Commission, passed away peacefully at South Shore Hospital. A moment of silence was observed in his honor.

The Lottery for Ballot position for the November 5, 2013 General Election.

A lottery for ballot position for the November 5, 2013, General Municipal Election was conducted. The results of the lottery were as follows:

Mayor

Ted Hess-Mahan

Setti D. Warren

Aldermen-at-Large, Ward 1

Scott F. Lennon

Allan L. Ciccone, Jr.

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 2

Marcia T. Johnson

Susan S. Albright

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 3

James R. Cote

Ted Hess-Mahan

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 4

Amy Mah Sangiolo

Leonard J. Gentile

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 5

Brian Yates

Deborah J. Crossley

Christopher W. Steele

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 6

Victoria L. Danberg

Greg Schwartz

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 7

Ruthanne Fuller

Marc C. Laredo

Alderman-at-Large, Ward 8

David A. Kalis

Richard A. Lipof

School Committee, Ward 2

Andrea R. Streenstrup

Margaret L. Albright

Ward Alderman, Ward 1

Alison M. Leary

Allan L. Ciccone

Ward Alderman, Ward 2

Eve M. Tapper

Emily Northon

All other races had only a single candidate.

The Lottery for Ballot position for the Neighborhood Area Council Elections.

A lottery for ballot position for the November 5, 2013 Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council and the Newton Upper Falls Area Council was conducted. The results of the lottery were as follows:

Newton Highlands Neighborhood Area Council

Barbara A. Darnell
G. Groot Gregory
Ronald A. Mauri
Srdjan S. Nedeljkovic
Robert L. Burke
Robert M. Solomon
Rodney M. Barker

Newton Upper Falls Neighborhood Area Council

Jeffrey R. Riklin
Mark Bridger
J. David Ohanian
Nina Kochs
John F. Neville, Jr.
Marie T. Jackson
Susan Huffman
Anil Adyanthaya

A lottery for ballot position for the October 1, 2013 Newtonville Neighborhood Area Council was conducted. The results were as follows:

Newtonville Neighborhood Area Council

Wayne Koch
Timothy D. Stone
Stephen Bart
Joyce H. Huber
Marc D. Kaufman
Barbara L. Perlo
Jacqueline Freeman
Helene K. Sroat
Thomas D. Kraus

Minutes

The minutes from the August 15, 2013 meeting were reviewed. There were no changes and the minutes were approved unanimously.

An Update on the September 17, 2013 Preliminary Election

City Clerk David Olson noted that the Preliminary Election went very smoothly. It was a quiet day with an 11% voter turnout citywide. The tabulating of the results went very quickly that

night and all of the precincts had reported by about 8:45 pm. The only concerns of the day had to do with the polling locations at the schools. The custodians had been instructed to keep all doors locked but to prop open the doors that would be used by voters. This led to some confusion first thing in the morning as doors were either wide open or locked shut. A quick e-mail to the school department resulted in a clarification from Joe Russo and Mike Cronin who made sure the voter entrance doors were unlocked. A day or two after the election David heard of a complaint that the Ward 1 Precinct 3 Polling Location was closed at 7:30 pm on election night. This is the Bigelow School and houses two precincts. He spoke with the Warden for 1/3 who assured him that the polls were open until 8:00 pm and that there were people voting after 7:30 pm. David looked at the tapes from the Accu-vote machines which show that the machines were closed out at 8:00 pm. A possible explanation for the perception that the polling location was closed could be that due to the tighter security at the school, only the entrance to the polling location was open – all other doors were locked. Commission members suggested that signage be improved including adding signage to locked doors directing voters to the open entrance.

Certification of the September 17, 2013 Preliminary Election

City Clerk David Olson presented the final results of the September 17, 2013 Preliminary Municipal Election. He noted that there were a small number of additions that were added to the results posted on election night. There were four provisional ballots that were counted and added to the totals, and the numbers include the number of write-in candidates. A motion to certify the election results was made and seconded. The results were certified unanimously.

To Address a Letter Sent by John Stewart Regarding Endorsements of Municipal Candidates by Political Parties.

John Stewart joined the Commissioners for the discussion. Mr. Stewart has seen a growing involvement by the Newton Democratic City Committee in municipal elections. Although the Committee's website states that endorsements are prohibited, the committee informally gives aid to members of the party who are running for municipal office. On its website, the committee states that they will support their members by including notices of the candidates local campaign events in its electronic communications. In Mr. Stewart's opinion, this is helping candidates in municipal elections because they are Democrats. It is not an endorsement, but it is very close to an endorsement. He believes this violates the spirit of the City Charter. If this practice continues it could do serious damage to the non-partisan nature of City elections. He pointed out that one of the candidates in Ward 1, who is a member of the Democratic Ward Committee, is listed as the candidate for the position. The other individual is not listed. This is a bad practice.

Commissioner Butler noted that these actions do not violate the Law and asked what Mr. Stewart would like the commission to do?

City Clerk Olson noted that the Commission was following the charter and conducting non-partisan municipal elections. There is no indication of party affiliation on the ballot. It was not the role of the Commission to regulate the speech of the political parties.

Mr. Stewart asked what will prevent a political party from endorsing a municipal candidate? Commissioner Butler noted that the Newton Democratic Party's by-laws do not allow endorsing a municipal candidate.

Commissioner McDermott asked if Mr. Stewart knew of any instance in other communities where this question has been posed or a charge or accusation has been brought. Mr. Stewart did not know of any other communities. He reiterated that he was concerned that the committees were asserting more influence.

Commissioner Butler noted that she had looked at the Secretary of State's website to see if the Committee's practices were in violation of any law and noted that a city attorney had been consulted who advised that there was nothing that the Commission should do in this instance as the Commission was following the charter.

Future Meeting Dates

Commissioner Butler asked if the start time of the November meeting could be moved earlier and the start time of 6:00 pm was agreed upon. The next meeting will be:

November 12, 2013 at 6:00 pm – Certification of the November 5 Municipal Election

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.